CLAIMS

We claim:

1.   1.   A method of customizing a multi-media message created by a sender for a

2   recipient, the multi-media message having an animated entity audibly presenting speech

3   converted from text created by the sender, the method comprising:

4   receiving at least one image from the sender;

5   associating each at least one image with a tag;

6   presenting the sender with options to insert the tag associated with one of the at

7   least one image into the sender text; and

8   after the sender inserts the tag associated with one of the at least one images into

9   the sender text, delivering the multi-media message with the at least one image presented

10   as background to the animated entity according to a position of the tag associated with

11   the at least one image in the sender text.

1   2.   The method of customizing a multi-media message created by a sender for a

2   recipient of claim 1, wherein delivering the multi-media message further comprises

3   presenting the at least one image as background when a word prior to the position of the

4   tag associated with the at least one image is presented by the animated entity.

1   3.   The method of customizing a multi-media message created by a sender for a

2   recipient of claim 1, wherein the at least one image is a static image.

1   4.   The method of customizing a multi-media message created by a sender for a

2   recipient of claim 1, wherein the at least one image is a video.

1   5.   A method of customizing a multi-media message created by a sender for a

2   recipient, the multi-media message having an animated entity audibly presenting speech

3   converted from text created by the sender, the method comprising:

4   storing a group of predefined images;

5   associating each predefined image with a tag;

6   presenting the sender with options to insert a tag associated with one of the

7   group of predefined images into the sender text; and

8   after the sender inserts the tag associated with one of the group of predefined

9   images into the sender text, delivering the multi-media message with the image associated

10   with the inserted tag presented as background to the animated entity according to a

11   position of the tag within the sender text.

1   6.   The method of customizing a multi-media message created by a sender for a

2   recipient of claim 5, further comprising:

3   receiving at least one sender-created image;

4   associating each at least one sender-created image with a sender-image tag;

5   presenting the sender with an option to insert a sender-image tag associated with

6   one of the at least one sender-created images into the sender text; and

7   after the sender inserts the sender-image tag associated with one of the at least

8   one sender-created images into the sender text, delivering the multi-media message with

9   the sender-created image associated with the inserted sender-image tag presented as

10   background to the animated entity according to a position of the sender-image tag within

11   the sender text.

1   7.   A method of customizing a multi-media message created by a sender for a

2   recipient, the multi-media message having an animated entity audibly presenting speech

3   converted from text created by the sender, the method using stored predefined images

4   having associated image tags and stored sender-created images having associated sender-

5   created tags, the method comprising:

6   presenting the sender with options to insert image tags and sender-created tags

7   into the sender text; and

8   after the sender inserts the image tag or sender-created tags, delivering the multi-

9   media message with the predefined images or sender-created images associated with the

10   inserted image tags and/or sender-created tags presented as background to the animated

11   entity according to a position of the respective tag within the sender text.

1   8.   The method of customizing a multi-media message created by a sender for a

2   recipient of claim 7, wherein the predefined images or sender-created images are

3   displayed as background to the animated entity as soon as a predetermined number of

4   words prior to the position of the respective tag within the sender text begins to be

5   delivered.

1   9.   The method of customizing a multi-media message created by a sender for a

2   recipient of claim 7, wherein the predefined images are either static images or video

3   images.

1   10.   The method of customizing a multi-media message created by a sender for a

2   recipient of claim 9, wherein the sender-created images are either static images or video

3   images.

1   11.   A method of customizing a multi-media message created by a sender for a

2   recipient, the multi-media message having an animated entity audibly presenting speech

3   converted from text created by the sender, the method using stored images having

4   associated image tags, the method comprising:

5   presenting the sender with options to insert image tags into the sender text;

6   presenting the sender with options to position the animated entity in any location

7   on a display screen using animated entity position tags; and

8   after the sender inserts the image tags and animated entity position tags,

9   delivering the multi-media message with the images associated with the inserted image

10   tags presented as background to the animated entity according to a position of the

11   respective tag within the sender text and wherein the position of the animated entity

12   during the delivery of the multi-media message is associated with the animated entity

13   position tags.

1   12.   The method of customizing a multi-media message created by a sender for a

2   recipient of claim 11, wherein the stored images are static and/or video images.

1   13.   The method of customizing a multi-media message created by a sender for a

2   recipient of claim 12, further comprising:

3   presenting the sender with an option to remove the animated entity from the

4   display screen using an animated entity remove tag; and

5   if the sender inserts the animated entity remove tag, delivering the multi-media

6   message with the images associated with the inserted image tags presented as background

7   while removing the animated entity according to a position of the animated entity

8   remove tag within the sender text.

1   14.   A method of customizing a multi-media message created by a sender for a

2   recipient, the multi-media message having an animated entity audibly presenting speech

3   converted from text created by the sender, the method using stored video segments

4   having associated video tags, the method comprising:

5   presenting the sender with options to insert stored video segment tags into the

6   sender text; and

7   if the sender inserts one or more video segment tags in the sender text,

8   delivering the multi-media message with the video segments associated with the inserted

9   video tags presented as background to the animated entity according to a position of the

10   respective video tag within the sender text.

1   15.   The method of customizing a multi-media message created by a sender for a

2   recipient of claim 14, wherein the stored video segments are non-sender-created and

3   optionally sender-created, each having their associated video tags, and wherein presenting

4   the sender with options to insert stored video segment tags into the sender text further

5   comprises presenting the sender with options to insert stored video segment tags

6   associated with non-sender-created video segments and, if stored, presenting the sender

7   with options to insert video segments tags associated with sender-created video

8   segments.

1   16.   A method of sending a multi-media message from a sender to a recipient, the

2   multi-media message including an animated entity for delivering a message having text,

3   the method comprising:

4   providing the sender with a group of customizable multi-media message

5   templates, each template of the groups of templates including predefined parameters

6   comprising a predefined text message, a predefined animated entity, a predefined

7   background, predefined background music, and a predefined set of emoticons within the

8   text of the message; and

9   if the sender chooses a customizable multi-media message template, presenting

10   the sender with options to change any of the predefined parameters.

1   17.   The method of sending a multi-media message from a sender to a recipient of

2   claim 16, wherein once the sender customizes the multi-media message template, if at all,

3   the method further comprises delivering the multi-media message to the recipient.

1   18.   The method of sending a multi-media message from a sender to a recipient of

2   claim 16, wherein presenting the sender with options to change any of the predefined

3   parameters further comprises presenting the user with an option to add the name of the

4   recipient to the multi-media message.

1   19.   The method of sending a multi-media message from a sender to a recipient of

2   claim 16, wherein presenting the sender with options to change any of the predefined

3   parameters further comprises presenting the user with an option to choose from a list of

4   predefined and/or sender-added options for each of the template parameters for

5   customizing the multi-media message.

1   20.   The method of sending a multi-media message from a sender to a recipient of

2   claim 16, wherein presenting the sender with options to change any of the predefined

3 parameters further comprises presenting the user with an option to choose at least one

4 position from which the animated entity will deliver the message.

1 21. The method of sending a multi-media message from a sender to a recipient of

2 claim 20, wherein presenting the user with an option to choose at least one position from

3 which the animated entity will deliver the message further comprises presenting the user

4 with an option to control animated entity entrance and departure features.

1 22. The method of sending a multi-media message from a sender to a recipient of

2 claim 16, further comprising presenting the user with an option to modify a camera

3 position using camera control tags within the text.

1 23. A method of sending a multi-media message from a sender to a recipient, the

2 multi-media message including an animated entity for delivering a message having text,

3 the method comprising:

4 providing the sender with options to choose an animated entity from a group of

5 animated entities;

6 once the sender chooses an animated entity to deliver the message, presenting the

7 sender with options to add accessories to the animated entity; and

8 once the sender chooses accessories to add to the animated entity, if any,

9 delivering the multi-media message to the recipient.

1 24. The method of sending a multi-media message from a sender to a recipient of

2 claim 23, wherein presenting the sender with options to add accessories to the animated

3 entity further comprises presenting the sender with options to add accessories

4 comprising glasses, ear rings, hats, shirts, hair color, hair style, and facial hair.

1 25. The method of sending a multi-media message from a sender to a recipient of

2 claim 23, wherein presenting the sender with options to add accessories to the animated

3 entity further comprises presenting the sender with a list of accessories, the list of

4   accessories including accessories provided by a multi-media message service provider and

5   accessories added by the sender.

1   26.   The method of sending a multi-media message from a sender to a recipient of

2   claim 23, wherein upon the sender choosing accessory options, presenting the sender

3   with a preview of the animated entity with the chosen accessory options.

1   27.   A method of sending a multi-media message from a sender to a recipient, the

2   multi-media message including an animated entity for delivering a message having text,

3   the method comprising:

4   providing the sender with options to choose an animated entity from a group of

5   animated entities;

6   providing the sender with options to insert emoticons in the text of the message;

7   providing the sender with options to modify an amplitude of emoticons inserted

8   in the text of the message;

9   once the sender chooses emoticons to add to the animated entity, if any,

10   delivering the multi-media message to the recipient.

1   28.   The method of sending a multi-media message of claim 27, further comprising:

2   if the sender modifies the amplitude of emoticons inserted in the text, changing

3   the appearance of the modified emoticons in the text of the message to reflect the

4   change in amplitude for each modified inserted emoticon.

1   29.   The method of sending a multi-media message of claim 28, wherein the

2   appearance of the modified emoticons comprises changing the modified emoticon from

3   a black on white background to black on colored background.

1   30.   The method of sending a multi-media message of claim 29, wherein the

2   appearance of the modified emoticons relates to an intensity of the modified amplitude.